

# REPORT OF THE FLAG COMMITTEE





Sons of the American revolution, Empire state society

**Report**

of the

**Flag Committee**

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TO THE EMPIRE STATE SOCIETY,

SONS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION:

*Your Committee known as the Flag Committee begs leave to Report:*

Heretofore perhaps no formal report of the doings of your Committee has been made to the Society. It is now nearly two years since the adoption of the Resolution on March 15, 1897, by virtue of which the Committee was appointed. The Resolution was in these words:

*"Resolved: That this Society appoint a permanent Committee of thirteen, to have in charge all matters relating to the preservation of the National Flag from desecration, with full authority to join with other Societies, patriotic, historical, genealogical, to the same end, and also to solicit the co-operation of all such societies to that end, and that such Committee have power to fill all vacancies and to fix its own quorum and make rules for its own business, and that such Committee be known as the Flag Committee."*

The Resolution was adopted March 15, 1897, and soon after the Committee was appointed, which Committee, its vacancies from time to time being filled, now consists as follows:

RALPH E. PRIME, Chairman,  
DAVID MC. N. K. STAUFFER, Secretary,  
GEN. FREDERICK D. GRANT,  
GEN. THOMAS WILSON,  
REV. JAMES M. KING, D.D.,  
JOHN QUINCY ADAMS,  
ARTHUR F. STANIFORD,  
J. WARREN CUTLER,  
WILLIAM R. ELLIS,  
WALTER S. CARTER,  
MAJ. FRANK H. PHIPPS,  
EDWARD PAYSON CONE,  
WILLIAM D. BELL, M. D.

This Society, by the aforesaid action, has become practically the pioneer in this campaign of effort to defend the Flag of our Country from desecration. It is not to be denied, that other Committees for a similar purpose had been before appointed by other societies, but the appointment of your Committee and the adoption of your resolution was the first of a series of actions by very many patriotic societies all to the same end and many under a resolution in the same words, the efforts of all of which have at last culminated in something accomplished with the promise of more to be accomplished and of a final complete success.

In the Summer of 1897, it was determined to unify and co-ordinate the efforts of the several Flag Committees of all the Patriotic Societies. At a meeting held in the month of August, 1897, at the Normandie Hotel, New York City, at which were present the members of the Flag Committee of the National Society, Sons of the American Revolution as well as the members of your own Flag Committee, it was determined within the power conferred in your resolution to call a Mass Meeting of all Flag Committees then appointed, and accordingly such a meeting was held in the month of December, in the City of New York, at which were present representatives of many different Flag Committees, at which meeting the subject of co-ordinating our efforts in one direction and for the common purpose was discussed and a committee was appointed to draft a plan of organization. The following February, at a meeting held in the City Hall in the City of New York, a plan of organization was reported and adopted embracing within its membership the Flag Committees of the following Societies :

Of the Sons of the American Revolution,

The Empire State Society,  
The National Society,  
The New Jersey Society,  
The Pennsylvania Society,  
The District of Columbia Society,  
The Illinois Society,  
The Massachusetts Society.

Of the Daughters of the American Revolution,

The National Society,  
The Mary Washington Colonial Chapter,  
The Milwaukee Chapter,  
The Washington Heights Chapter,  
The Fort Greene Chapter,  
Keskicks Chapter.

Of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion,

The New York State Commandery,  
The Commandery in Chief,  
The Maine Commandery,  
The District of Columbia Commandery,  
The Illinois Commandery,  
The Washington Commandery,  
The Michigan Commandery,  
The Vermont Commandery,  
The Kansas Commandery,  
The Iowa Commandery.

Of the Order of Founders and Patriots of America,

The New York Society,  
The General Court,  
The New Jersey Society,  
The Pennsylvania Society.

The American Institute of Civics.

The National League for the Protection of American Institutions.

The Society of the War of 1812.

The National Society of Naval Veterans.

And there was formed pursuant to that plan of organization by the several Flag Committees, a union under the name of "The American Flag Association," whose objects are to co-ordinate the efforts of all the Committee for the preservation of the Flag of our country from misuse and desecration. To this list of Flag Committees there have since been added:

Of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion,

    The California Commandery.

Of the Society of the Colonial Wars,

    The Illinois Society.

The Daughters of 1781-1815.

The present officers of the American Flag Association and its Executive Committee, which consists of the officers and seven other members, are as follows :

RALPH E. PRIME, President,

GEN. O. O. HOWARD, Vice-President,

GEN. FRED. D. GRANT, Vice-President,

GEN. THOMAS WILSON, Secretary,

EDWARD HAGAMAN HALL, Secretary,

MAJ. J. LANGDON WARD, Treasurer,

GEN. JOSEPH C. BRECKINRIDGE,

CHARLES KINGSBURY MILLER,

WALTER CHANDLER,

MISS MARY VAN B. VANDERPOOL,

REV. JAMES M. KING, D. D.,

EDWARD PAYSON CONE,

GEN. H. C. KING.

Your Committee, acting through the American Flag Association, first directed its efforts to Congressional Legislation. The legislation from that source had been sought by individuals steadily but unsuccessfully for the past ten years. The long continuance of the lack of success was most probably a misfortune to the cause. We met with no better success. Promises were made to us but the sequence of the promise never materialized and there now lie in the hands of the Committee of both Houses of Congress just about to a nearly a score of bills, differing in form and in words and often times in purpose, none of which have ever been reported to either House. An opinion seems to have filled the minds of Members of Congress that it was an open question as to whether the people of our country wanted any legislation to defend the Flag from desecration. One way to inform Congress on that subject, we determined, was to ask State Legislation. We have sought such and not without avail. The State of Pennsylvania led off by writing upon her Statute Book an act making it

criminal to defile or desecrate the Flag. Vermont followed. New York State followed next in order, and this Society owes a resolution of thanks to Hon. C. F. Collins, a member of Assembly from the City of New York, in recognition of his patriotic service in the Legislature of New York and securing the passage of the Flag Bill by the Senate and the Assembly. Our patriotic Governor, Hon. Theodore Roosevelt, celebrated Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1899, in a manner truly in harmony with the spirit and the sentiment of the day in affixing his signature of approval to the Flag Bill of the State of New York, by which it was written upon the Statutes of this State having been passed and becoming a law on the anniversary of the birthday of the Father of our Country. Our Vice-President, Hon. Robert B. Roosevelt, brought about, in the month of December last, a meeting between the Governor Elect and the President of the American Flag Association and Mr. Edward Hagaman Hall, one of the Secretaries, at which Mr. Roosevelt, the Governor Elect, assured us that if we succeeded in getting the Flag Bill through the two houses of the Legislature, as was done in the Legislature of 1898 (but later pigeon holed), he would sign it without a moment's hesitation. He verified that promise on Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1899.

Connecticut has also fallen in line. Through Compatriot Charles A. Jewell, of Hartford, Conn., we were able to put into the hands of Hon. Harrison B. Freeman, Jr., of Hartford, Conn., a member of its Legislature, a copy of the same bill, and so effectual was his work that on Washington's Birthday, February 22, 1899, the bill passed both Houses of that Legislature on the same day, a remarkable and unusual circumstance, and only needed the signature of the Governor to make it the law of that State.

The same bill has been introduced in the General Court of Massachusetts and Gen. Francis H. Appleton, President of the Massachusetts Society of the Sons of the American Revolution and the Chairman of its Flag Committee, has kindly consented, at our request, to give it his personal attention and we are hoping that he will succeed in causing it this year to be written on the Statute Books of the old Bay State.

The bill has been introduced by Mr. Carroll in the Legislature of New Jersey. We have furnished that Legislature with petitions from nearly a score of our Flag Committees asking its enactment, and we hope that the Legislature will not come to its day of adjournment before it shall have passed the bill. . .

In Illinois, a bill patterned upon the New York bill, is pending in its Legislature, and Charles Kingsbury Miller, Esq., a member of the Executive Committee of the American Flag Association and chairman of the Flag Committee of the Illinois Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, is pushing the work there.

In the Legislature of Missouri the bill is pending. Gen. George H. Shields, President of the Missouri Society, Sons of the American Revolution, has charge of the work.

The Registrar of the Colorado Society, Sons of the American Revolution, has been induced to present the matter to the Legislature of that State.

California is far off, but measures have been taken to have the bill introduced into the Legislature and rumors are current that it has been passed by the Legislature and is a Statute of that State. We hope for confirmation of such good news.

Measures are already perfect and steps have been taken to introduce the bill into the Legislatures of Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

How many of these States will take it up this year and what our success will be in the main, cannot yet be said.\* We look for much success. We shall keep at it until, if possible, every State in our National Union shall have written upon its Statute Books a bill that will keep the symbol of our Nation clean and clear and defended from desecration.

There are two principal reasons for securing State Legislation:

1. Wherever a State Legislature acts, so far it shows by a ringing note to members of Congress the public sentiment in that State in favor of Flag Legislation, and when enough States have spoken to satisfy Congress of what the public sentiment is, then we shall hope for Federal Legislation.

2. A Federal Statute must be enforced by Federal officers and only in our great cities are they to be found, and the distance of the forum of the trial from the place of the offence against the Flag, determines the probability of prosecution of offenders, and long distances between the two places make the prosecution improbable. A State Statute is enforced by State Officers, and every township has its constables and justices of the peace, so that wherever an offender goes he finds a law officer to apprehend and punish his offence. These two considerations lead us to advocate at once State Legislation everywhere it can be obtained.

There is one feeling that we deprecate, and that is the determination on the part of one of the noblest advocates of Flag Legislation to have their own ideas in a Flag Bill or none at all. In this work we must have union. We must sacrifice all our pet notions and get what is practicable and obtainable, and none ought to claim his or her bill is the best bill, for the best bill is the bill which we are able to get.

We recommend the adoption of the following resolutions:

*Resolved*: That the thanks of the Empire State Society, Sons of the American Revolution be and they are hereby tendered to Hon. Theodore Roosevelt, Governor of the State of New York, for his patriotic service in celebrating Washington's Birthday, 1899, by subscribing his approval to the bill for the preserving the American Flag from desecration, thereby writing that law in the Statutes of the State of New York.

\*Since this report was presented other States have adopted and enacted flag bills, so that the list of such States now includes, Maine, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Arizona and California, nine States.

*Resolved* : That the thanks of the Empire State Society, Sons of the American Revolution be and they are hereby tendered to Hon. C. F. Collins, Member of Assembly from the City of New York, in the Legislature of this State, for his patriotic, untiring and successful service to his country in procuring the passage by the Legislature of the act to prevent desecration of the American Flag.

*Resolved* : That the action of the Flag Committee of the Empire State Society, Sons of the American Revolution, in joining the American Flag Association be and the same is hereby ratified and approved, and the American Flag Association has the sympathy and hearty good will of this Society in the work in which it is engaged, for the success of which we tender it and the Flag Committees co-ordinating their efforts therein, the co-operation of all the compatriots of this Society.

All of which is respectfully submitted.

For the Committee,

RALPH E. PRIME,  
Chairman.



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